

West Lothian Council

Local Scrutiny Plan

2017/18



West Lothian Council

Local Scrutiny Plan – April 2017 to March 2018

Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in West Lothian Council during the financial year 2017/18. The plan is based on a shared risk assessment undertaken by a local area network (LAN), comprising representatives of all the scrutiny bodies who engage with the council. The shared risk assessment process draws on a range of evidence with the aim of determining any scrutiny activity required and focusing this in the most proportionate way.
2. This plan does not identify or address all risks in the council. It covers only those risk areas that the LAN has identified as requiring scrutiny, or where scrutiny is planned as part of a national programme. Planned scrutiny activity across all councils in Scotland informs the National Scrutiny Plan for 2017/18, which is available on the Audit Scotland website.

Scrutiny risks

3. The conclusion of this year's shared risk assessment is that no scrutiny risks have been identified which require specific scrutiny by the LAN in 2017/18. This is a positive position for the council and is consistent with the LAN view last year. Scrutiny activity undertaken in the last 12 months was either part of routine ongoing inspection work, or part of national activity. It included the following non-risk based scrutiny which took place over the year:
 - The Care Inspectorate led on a project on the validated self- evaluation of Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs) across Scotland during 2016. Fieldwork activity concluded and all ADPs received individual summary feedback to support continuous improvement. A national report will be published on this work in May 2017.
 - In November 2016 the Scottish Government launched the national strategy for community justice alongside the Outcome Performance and Improvement Framework. The Scottish Government commissioned the Care Inspectorate to develop a guide to self-evaluation for community justice in Scotland and forms the basis of the model for scrutiny and inspection of community justice in the future. A transitional plan is in place for the statutory criminal justice partners and work has been undertaken to ensure that the objectives of presenting and reducing offending are addressed through the new arrangements.

4. Performance and improvement: The council has robust self-evaluation arrangements in place that it uses effectively to assess performance and drive improvement. There is a well-established and structured approach to managing performance. Quarterly performance reporting provides detailed management information on the efficiency and effectiveness of services. The council's Performance Committee provides effective scrutiny. The authority has spent almost all of its allocated Scottish Attainment Challenge funding. Plans for taking forward the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) are well advanced.
5. Governance and transparency: the council has effective overarching and supporting governance arrangements which provide an appropriate framework for organisational decision-making. The council has arrangements to ensure transparency. Structures are in place to enable local citizens to engage with decision-making processes. The corporate plan sets out West Lothian Council's strategic direction and priorities for the years 2013-2017. There are eight priorities and each of them represents a strategic and joined up approach to maximising opportunities and tackling the issues and challenges that must be overcome to achieve successful outcomes.
6. Financial sustainability: the council has a credible medium term financial plan in place. In setting the budget for 2017/18, the council drew on-previously agreed positions for income generation and efficiency savings. While a council tax freeze was approved, funding through use of existing reserves, the council also approved that a priority based revenue financial plan for 2018/19 to 2022/23 would be prepared, to set out how the Corporate Plan will be delivered in that time period.
7. In order to assess the risk to social landlord services, the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has reviewed and compared the performance of all Scottish social landlords to identify the weakest performing landlord. SHR has assessed that no additional scrutiny is required in West Lothian Council beyond statutory/ongoing work during 2017/18.

Planned scrutiny activity

8. As shown in Appendix 1, the council will be subject to a range of risk-based based and nationally driven scrutiny activity between April 2017 and March 2018. For some of their scrutiny activity in 2017/18, scrutiny bodies are still to determine their work programmes which specific council areas they will cover. Where a council is to be involved, the relevant scrutiny body will confirm this with the council and the appropriate LAN lead.
9. The Accounts Commission agreed the overall framework for a new approach to auditing Best Value in June 2016. Best Value will be assessed over the five year audit appointment, as part of the annual audit work. In addition a Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) for each council will be considered by the Accounts Commission at least once in this five year period. The appointed external auditor (Ernst and Young) and Audit Scotland will carry out Best Value audit work during 2017, resulting in a Best

Value Assurance Report to the Accounts Commission in November 2017. The focus of the Best Value work will be:

- The council's vision and priorities
 - Financial sustainability
 - Financial governance and resource management
 - Performance management and self-evaluation framework, and measurement of outcomes
 - Community engagement, particularly through citizen led inspections
 - Partnership working, drawing on findings of the *Joint Inspection of Children's Services*
 - Arms length external organisations (ALEO) governance arrangements
10. SHR will publish the findings of its thematic inquiry work into gas safety and repairs completed during 2016/17. It may carry out further thematic inquiries during 2017/18. Where councils are to be involved in a thematic inquiry or a data accuracy visit, the SHR will confirm this directly with the council and the LAN lead.
 11. The Care Inspectorate will lead a joint inspection of services for children and young people beginning in March 2017 and will also involve participation by Healthcare Improvement Scotland Education Scotland and HMICS. These inspections are part of the Care Inspectorate's wider planned programme of national scrutiny work and not as a result of the LAN's assessment.
 12. In addition to specific work shown in Appendix 1, routine, scheduled audit and inspection work will take place through the annual audit process and the ongoing inspection of school and care establishments by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate respectively. Audit Scotland will carry out a programme of performance audits during 2017/18 and individual audit and inspection agencies will continue to monitor developments in key areas of council activity and will provide support and challenge as appropriate. This will help to inform future assessment of scrutiny risk.

May 2017

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Ernst & Young/Audit Scotland	The appointed external auditor (Ernst & Young) and Audit Scotland will carry out Best Value audit work during 2017, resulting in a Best Value Assurance Report to the Accounts Commission in November 2017.	Onsite fieldwork May – July 2017
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work in a range of areas covering local government during 2017/18. These include ALEOs, city deals, children's mental health and health and social care integration. Any engagement with individual councils is still to be determined. Details of future audit work are available on the Audit Scotland website here .	
Care Inspectorate	The Care Inspectorate has been leading a project on the validated self-evaluation of Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs) across Scotland during 2016. Field work activity has concluded and all ADPs received individual summary feedback to support continuous improvement. A national report will be published on our work in May 2017.	
Care Inspectorate	The Care Inspectorate will lead a joint inspection of services for children and young people, involving Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Education Scotland and HMICS as scrutiny partners.	March/April 2017
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	The Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland will introduce a revised approach to the joint strategic inspections of services for adults for 2017/18 which will assess the extent to which the planning, organisation and coordination of services comply with the principles of integration and contribute to the national health and wellbeing outcomes. Inspections will include a focus on joint strategic commissioning. In 2017/18, the Care Inspectorate will also lead on thematic activity in the areas of adult support and protection and self-directed support, working with a range of scrutiny partners.	
Education Scotland	A new model of inspection for Community Learning and Development (CLD) has been developed. The inspection will be based on the local authority area and will include	


	<p>local authority CLD provision and partners. It is anticipated that all local authorities will be covered in the next three years.</p> <p>Follow-up review of the quality of Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) services delivered by Skills Development Scotland across all council areas.</p>	
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	No scrutiny activity planned	
Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI)	No scrutiny activity planned	
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	SHR will publish the findings of its thematic inquiry work into gas safety and repairs completed during 2016/17. It may carry out further thematic inquiries during 2017/18	
	SHR will also review the Scottish Social Housing Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during the second quarter of 2017/18. Where councils are to be involved in a thematic inquiry or a data accuracy visit, the SHR will confirm this directly with the council and the LAN lead.	

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A summary of local government strategic scrutiny activity

This report is available in PDF and RTF formats,
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www.audit-scotland.gov.uk 

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